

Fourth Annual State of Neighborhood Address

Mayor Ronald O. Loveridge
Saturday, November 22, 2004

To friends and good neighbors of Riverside, welcome to the Fourth Annual Mayor's State of Neighborhoods Address.

Thank you to our host, California Baptist University. Speaking as Mayor, I am proud of the exceptional architecture, mission, and excellence that defines CBU. As we start the 21st Century, Riverside is indeed a university community. CBU along with University of California, Riverside; La Sierra University, and Riverside Community College have come of age.

It is the best of times to live in Riverside! As an exciting, diverse, urban, and successful city, we are increasingly a community of choice. Real estate values are at their highest levels.

Retail choices are increasing, and strikingly so. For example, count the number of Starbucks -- what is your number? My count is eight. Go to our bookstores, UCR, Barnes and Noble, and soon, Borders. Or, have you shopped at Vons at the Plaza, Target at Canyon Crossing or either Cardenas Market or El Tapatio on Van Buren? There's never been a better time to SHOP RIVERSIDE!

In April of this year, 2004, Riverside was selected as one of America's 30 most livable communities. Six California cities were selected by Partners for Livable Communities: San Diego, San Jose, Sacramento, Santa Rosa, Ventura, and Riverside. The selection criteria were summarized as "those American cities that have taken leadership efforts toward preparing themselves for the creative economy, while focusing on quality of life issues and amenity-based economics." Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger commented: "All of the California cities selected for this honor are wonderful places. These cities have been acknowledged because they have created livable communities that are good for business... and are people-friendly."

Also this year, the City Council identified and agreed on five priorities for 2004-05; two of which were neighborhoods and livable community.

Today is a celebration of Riverside's "most livable" neighborhoods. Specifically we recognize and salute Manuel Ormande for receiving the Jack B. Clarke Good Neighbor Award. We applaud and value the 21 awards for Neighborhoods That Work and the 25 Neighborhood Pride Awards.

Neighborhoods are where we live, where we raise our families, and where we have our greatest economic investment. Neighborhoods are the litmus test of city services. Neighborhoods are where we experience "quality of life." Neighborhoods are the building blocks of a good city. Riverside's future depends on what is happening in our 26 community neighborhoods.

I recognize that neighborhoods work because residents care about their homes, families, and neighborhoods. It is your good will and hard work that makes Riverside a community of choice.

Noteworthy, however, since 1990, the City has taken many steps forward to recognize and enhance neighborhoods. I count as many as 50 such steps. Together they are indeed impressive, for we are now among the leaders in California, even the nation.

Many, many kudos are in order. Code enforcement, traffic calming and our over 220 speed humps, the Eastside Strategic Plan, Public Works' CURE—(Clean Up Riverside's Environment), and the Eric Solander Arlanza Youth and Family Resource Center are all examples of positive steps we have taken to make our neighborhoods good places to live.

However, let me frame my remarks, albeit briefly, in three ways -- first the five most successful steps, then the five most promising, and finally the five most disappointing.

The five most successful steps are certainly national best practices. As such, they should be recognized and celebrated.

First is our Office of Neighborhoods. Thank you Eva Yakutis-McNiel and the staff of the Office of Neighborhoods for your great work. Kudos to Annual Neighborhood Conference and the Neighborhood Leadership Academy. This Office has sought to empower neighborhoods across the city. When started in 2001, there were 12 identifiable neighborhood organizations, now there are 145!

Second is our Keep Riverside Clean & Beautiful. Led by Nancy Melendez, its dynamic and effective Executive Director, KRCB is our city's signature volunteer group. In 2003, KRCB volunteers, some 13,757 strong, worked at 142 events and collected over 430,000 pounds of trash. KRCB was awarded last year the President's Circle Award from Keep America Beautiful.

Third is our Crime Free Multi Housing Program. Led by the Police Department, it is best in the country. Over 335 multi-family projects participate by meeting various requirements and standards. The before and after differences in our neighborhoods are striking. Last year, Officer John Start was recognized as the International Crime Free Coordinator of the Year as well as the Officer of the Year for Riverside County. In spring 2005, Riverside will host the national conference on crime free multi-housing programs.

Fourth is the Neighborhood Livability Task Force. Thank you to the leadership of City Attorney Greg Priamos and Deputy City Attorney Mark Strain. Led by the City's Legal Department, this multi-department task force has identified and resolved many of the most difficult, "neighbor from hell" problems. It has done so by bringing together the resources and rules of the City to focus on housing, neighborhood crime, and related broken window problems.

And fifth is Mayor's Night Out. Speaking personally, I am proud of Mayor's Night Out. Each month we go to one of the City's 26 neighborhood communities. We bring City Hall to our neighborhoods, listening to requests and then making good things happen. This year we surpassed 100, completing our 103rd. Over 4,500 people have directly participated.

To summarize our most successful steps, Office of Neighborhoods, Keep Riverside Clean & Beautiful, Crime Free Multi Family Housing, Neighborhood Livability Task Force, and Mayor's Night Out, are national best practices.

Next , the five most promising steps should be strongly encouraged and fully supported.

The first is the General Plan Update, in my view the best and perhaps the most important General Plan in the City's 131 year history. Thank you to our Planning Director, Ken Gutierrez, and his staff for great work. To quote from a section called Our Neighborhoods: "A fundamental precept of Riverside's vision for the future is 'We empower neighborhoods.' To augment citywide objectives and policies for land use and urban design, this section presents detailed information about each of Riverside's 26 neighborhoods, their planning challenges and specific objectives and policies for each neighborhood." I would encourage you to go on line on the City's web site and review the General Plan's call for your community neighborhood.*

*The General Plan offers "global" objectives and policies for all Riverside's neighborhoods followed by objectives and policies individually crafted for each of our 26 community neighborhoods. I would specifically emphasize and strongly support two Policies: LU-28.8 and LU-28.9: "Establish a program to systematically update all of the City's Neighborhood Plans." And, "Develop/amend Neighborhood Plans with the participation of residents and property owners...and with the involvement of other community organizations or interest groups."

The second is neighborhood governance. Currently, the Riverside Neighborhood Partnership offers a citywide forum for neighborhood initiatives and views. The Partnership works as an advocate group for all of Riverside's neighborhoods. Let me recognize its Chair, Randy Akes. Also, this fall, an outstanding Neighborhood Governance Task Force has had a number of meetings. Thank you to its two co-chairs, Dave McNiel and Max Neiman. The Task Force is considering approaches that could incorporate residents and property owners into a neighborhood governance process that could work in all of Riverside's community neighborhoods. The Task Force will present its recommendations to the City Council early in 2005.**

** I strongly agree with the conclusion of The National Commission on Civic Renewal: "Neighborhoods are places where citizens learn the importance of what they have in common and of what they can accomplish when they act in concert. Every neighborhood should

assume responsibility for matters of significant local concern, emphasizing areas where neighbors can do meaningful civic work together."

A third is Riverside's quest to be a clean and green community. Many success stories are in place. We have already saluted Keep Riverside Clean And Beautiful. In October the City received a coveted model clean air community award from the South Coast Air Quality District, an award previously received by only two cities in Southern California. The Riverside Public Utilities Department has committed itself to 20% green power by 2020. And it has built or will build a number of important solar projects. In the past three years, the Parks and Recreation Department has spent over \$30 million in building, improving, and/or restoring our ball fields, landscaping, and parks.

We need to bring into focus and set priorities for initiatives and programs that will characterize and define the City and its neighborhoods as clean and green.

A fourth is our 311 Program, launched in June. You can now call one number, 826-5311, for all neighborhood complaints, information, and requests. It translates into more prompt and satisfactory responses. And it insures greater accountability by all departments. This approach is clearly judged a best practice for the delivery of good neighborhood services among U.S. cities.

The fifth is to create a more walkable community. In October, I appointed a diverse Walkable Community Task Force, co-chaired by Jim Clover and Mark Williams. We have received a \$35,000 grant from Kaiser to underwrite the work of the Task Force. Next February or March, this Task Force will present its recommendations to the community as well as to the City Council. Their work will center on how to make Riverside a walkable community, emphasizing design features, good health, and walking venues.

To summarize, our most promising steps to enhance or improve our neighborhoods, include the General Plan, neighborhood governance, clean and green community , 311 call center, and walkable community .

The last five steps I view as disappointing. We can do better. They require our focus, and the will to change.

The first is our diffused focus on homeownership. The extent of homeownership is closely related to the strength and vitality of a neighborhood. While our recent numbers have increased, Economist John Husing emphasized that our comparatively low level of home ownership of 46%, called out in the 2000 Census, is the potential Achilles' heel of Riverside. The City Council has set a goal of 60% homeownership by 2007.

Beyond recognizing the verdict of the marketplace, what should we do? Some directions -- we should each year revisit and implement the recommendations of the Homeownership Task Force. We should work closely with Alvord and RUSD to

reinvigorate At Home in Riverside, for the success stories of our schools should be told. While we spend big bucks promoting Riverside as a good city in which to do business, we should also devote some funds to telling why Riverside is a good place to live. Whereas six of our 26 community neighborhoods have less than 50% homeownership, we should develop a strategic approach to changing these numbers. And, as recently recommended by the Senior Housing Task Force, we must create or encourage places for seniors to live, and to own. In brief, all of these actions, and others, could increase homeownership in our neighborhoods.*

* As a City , we need continually to focus on increasing homeownership. In the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Focus is the secret of strength in politics, in war, in trade, in short in all management of human affairs."

The second is the lack of a satisfactory neighborhood report card. The neighborhood is the most critical test of the services and quality of life of a city .We should be accountable for what is happening in our neighborhoods. Where should we target our efforts? What neighborhoods deserve our closest attention, and support? For example, CDBG eligible areas should be contracting rather than expanding. We need to develop benchmarks for our neighborhoods. In short, we need a neighborhood report card.

The third is Neighborhood Watch. The Police Department has taken many excellent community policing steps, but the promise and potential of neighborhood watch remains unfulfilled. An effective neighborhood watch program reduces crime and increases neighborhood solidarity .We see this in groups such as SANWA--South Arlington Neighborhood Watch Association and the Meadows Mobile Home Park. We know what needs to be done; let's do it!

The fourth is the traffic challenge. We are doing many good things such as expanding roads, widening freeways, and implementing traffic calming measures. Let me focus, however, on the lack of an efficient, multi-option transportation system, one that provides residents with more than one way for getting around town.

A Task Force, chaired by Steve Whyld, called Go Riverside, has nearly completed its work. It was premised on the Boulder, Colorado, transit system, said by some to be the best in the country .The Task Force was asked to design transit options that work for Riverside. It will submit a report to the City Council and to Riverside Transit Agency Board in January .I look forward to their recommendations on how we can increase transit options for getting around town.

The fifth is our community centers and their almost exclusive focus on park and recreation activities. At several Neighborhood USA Conferences, I talked at length with city officials about the many services offered by their community centers. Few city departments, aside from Park and Recreation, are present at our community centers. We do not treat them as an extension of City Hall. We do not offer county, school, or

nonprofit services at most community centers. The Human Relations Commission has just completed a report on our community centers. The report evaluates what residents want as well as best practices. I look forward to a discussion of their recommendations and how our eight community centers can indeed become focal points for the neighborhoods of Riverside.

With attention, focus, and political will, each of the five disappointments -- homeownership, neighborhood report card, neighborhood watch, transit choices, and community centers -- can become steps in 2005 to strengthen the neighborhoods of Riverside.

In closing, the framework and vision for our General Plan was provided by "Visioning Riverside: A Report from the Community." It was prepared by MIG Consultants, the best in the nation in the vision business. The Report was based on conversations and contributions from hundreds of Riverside residents, outstanding staff work, and from face-to-face exchanges at many events and forums.

The vision of Riverside's future was described, in part, as follows:

"Riverside has fulfilled its promise as the city of potential--the place where the American Dream is realized. Home ownership and well paying jobs are the norm. ...

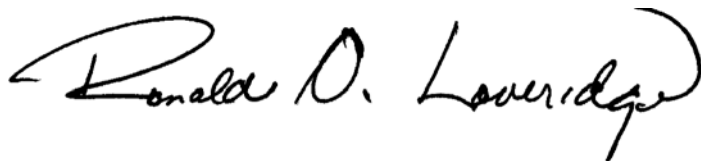
Quality, uniqueness, and diversity distinguish Riverside from other cities.

...people are able to find distinctive, special places to live. Each neighborhood is a safe, family oriented place. Distinct neighborhoods, each with its own history, are able to function independently, with nearby parks, playing fields, shopping and services."

This vision of Riverside and its neighborhoods can indeed happen.

This Annual Address and Award Ceremony is the time for our congratulations for your role/leadership in achieving the vision of our neighborhoods. It is your commitment to the American Dream. It is your hard work. And most of all, it is your good deeds and willingness to be a good neighbor.

Thank you!!! ~

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ronald D. Loveridge". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large loop at the end of the last name.